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### 10. ORTOLAN BUNTING *EMBERIZA HORTULANA* LINN. NEAR DELHI

On April 18, 1970, at 8.00 a.m. near the village of Mehrauli outside Delhi, we encountered a couple of buntings (*Emberiza* sp.) feeding on stony ground next to some Mughal ruins.

When first seen they were watched for five minutes at a range of about 20 yards while they fed slowly among stones and low vegetation. AJ's immediate reaction was that they appeared to be Ortolan Buntings (*E. hortulana*), a species with which he was familiar in Europe and Turkey, while PJ's comment was that they were unfamiliar to him, although resembling Greynecked Buntings (*E. buchanani*) seen at the spot once before.

We continued to examine them for about 20 minutes at ranges down to about 6 yards. They seemed rather tame and never flew far when disturbed. At one point they were joined by a third bird of the same species. They never perched on any prominence despite the abundance of old walls and boulders available but always landed on fairly open stony ground.

The following description was recorded on the spot. Light conditions were good and we were using 10 × and 8 × binoculars.

Size and shape as in Meadow Bunting (*E. cia*) with long tail and rather short legs, giving low horizontal stance on the ground.

*Plumage.* Grey head and nape, brown on wings and tail, with pale edges to flight feathers and white outer tail feathers. Edges of greater and median coverts pale, making pale bars. White eye-ring. Bill pink orange, legs orange-flesh. Breast rusty brown shading paler on the belly. Chin pale bordered by pale moustachial streaks, having a faint creamy yellow tint.

One individual, seen at close range for several minutes, showed

some brown on back, nape, and cheeks. Heads appeared rather a dirty dull grey in all three individuals.

'Call, only when disturbed, a soft "pt, pt" or "ti-ti-ti-ti".'

On April 19 we again visited the spot at about the same time of the day. We found at least five of the birds present but this time they seemed more wild and after a few minutes observation they flew off in a party and were not seen again. At about 25 yards range the following notes were added.

'Head dull-grey, sullied with brown on mantle, but not olive at all. Seemed grey-brown in some lights. Throat pale cream with slight yellowish tinge on moustachial streaks.'

Breast appears in retrospect to have been rather pale rust colour compared to Ortolan but shape, habits and general coloration were strongly reminiscent of that species. The time of year, however, suggests that the birds should have been in full plumage. The birds that AJ had seen in Turkey in similar plumage were probably already worn, possibly moulting, as the month was July.

Cail might be diagnostic (?).

PJ, examined skins of both species from the BNHS. The bill of *E. hortulana* is distinctly thicker at the base and shorter than that of *E. buchani*, and these features he had noted on the observed birds.

The SYNOPSIS records *E. hortulana* as taken twice in Gilgit and once in Kashmir on Spring migration, and the observation at Mehrauli appears to be the first record on the plains of the sub-continent.

DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION,  
WORLD WILDLIFE FUND, MORGES,  
SWITZERLAND.

PETER F. R. JACKSON

EDWARD GREY INSTITUTE OF  
FIELD ORNITHOLOGY,  
OXFORD, ENGLAND,  
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A. J. GASTON

## 11. THE CRESTED BUNTING, *MELOPHUS LATHAMI* (GRAY) IN BHAVNAGAR (SAURASHTRA), GUJARAT

There are not many records of this bird in Saurashtra. I first saw a hen Crested Bunting in the Gir Forest before I wrote my book on the Birds of Saurashtra and subsequently I have seen solitary